[For additional information on the growth of plantation agriculture see category 311, 6: Spate AW1 India.]

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CHAPTER THREE

Economic Structure

I. CASTE IN VILLAGE ECONOMY

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THE functional basis of the Indian caste system is generally well understood, but the integration of the different castes into the economic pattern of the rural community organization of India is not so well known. The occupations and functions of the different castes are not wholly exclusive, but the economic system of rural India is founded mainly on their functional specialization and interdependence. For example, agriculture is mainly the task of the Kapu group of castes, but all other castes—both high and low—can cultivate land, if they have any, besides following their traditional occupation. Similarly, trading was originally the function of the Komti caste, but now several other castes have also taken to it. However, a large number of crafts and occupations in rural India still remain the monopoly of different castes. A non-Brahmin cannot officiate as a priest for any of the higher castes. No one other than a Kummari will follow the profession of a potter. The Mangali alone would do the barber's work. Carpentry and working in metals are the monopoly of the Panch Bramha group of castes in Telangana. Only the Madiga will dispose of dead cattle and undertake to do leather-work. Castes other than the Sakali would not think of doing the washerman's work. Tradition has given to each group a definite position in the structure of the community, and with that position also goes a definite economic function which is the major source of livelihood for that group. As agriculture is the mainstay of the [433] rural economy of India, the crafts and occupations of the countryside are generally integrated with it. A brief analysis of the economic role of the different castes would give us a clear idea of the

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476 discharge of their functions. Tradition approves of such an arrangement, and mutual trust and inter-dependence ensure its continuity. Where this arrangement is accepted, a system of attachment of some families to certain other families naturally [433] follows. Agriculture being the most important activity of the countryside, the number of agriculturists is naturally the largest in the village population. These constitute the bulk of those who require and accept the occupational services of small caste groups offering them. Even the occupational castes stand in need of one another's services, although the number of families from each caste offering them within a village community is of necessity small. Each family will, therefore, attach itself to a number of families in the village and offer them services both in agricultural pursuits and socio-religious rites and ceremonies. Among the occupational castes themselves also there is a system of family attachments in operation. In Shamirpet some family affiliations date back to the time of the foundation of the village. Later immigrants either secured the services of some of the established families of the occupational castes, or they made arrangements with some of the newcomers to the village belonging to those castes.

476 623 626 This sytem is both complex and delicate. It is not easy for an agriculturist to remove a family attached to his household and secure the services of another. For example, A, a barber, is attached to the family of B, an agriculturist. If for any reason B is greatly dissatisfied with the services of A and wants those of another, he cannot abruptly dismiss A. His difficulty will not be in dismissing him, but in finding a substitute. Each of these castes [467] has its own inter-village council. Occupational castes have a developed trade unionism, and their code of professional ethics and etiquette too is very rigid. The dismissed person will be protected by this professional etiquette. No one else would be willing to act as a substitute, for fear of being penalized by the caste *panchayat*. It may even be difficult for a number of families to join together and import a family belonging to that occupational caste from a different village. First, under these conditions of tension, an outside family would not come for fear of social pressure and ultimate ostracism for such an action. And if they do come, the caste fellows already in the village will make things very difficult, even unbearable, for them. In the course of our investigations,

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311 ment, classified in government land records as belonging to this village, approximately 20·4 acres are covered by streams and small rivers, 25 acres by unmetalled roads and footpaths and 61 acres by irrigation channels. Thus apart from the 58 acres which provide the site for the village and the two hamlets attached to it, 106·4 acres are covered by these footpaths, channels and streams. The total land area of the village according to government records is 5,777 acres. Out of this 2,012 acres are uncul-
241 tivable; 162·8 acres being covered with rocks and shrubs. In all 3,765 acres are under cultivation in the village: 3,339·5 acres are classed as 'dry land', for this area is irrigated entirely by the rains; and 425·6 acres are classed as 'wet land' as extra irrigation is available. Although the dry land occupies a proportionately wider area, it is much less productive than the wet land. In 1951–52, out of the total village land revenue of Rs. 9,137 (Hyderabad currency) only Rs. 3,982/4/- were derived as revenue on dry land, the rest came from wet land. The wet land is further classified into *ābi*, *tābi* and *do fasla* land. In the *ābi* land seeds are sown in the rainy season (June to July) and harvested in mid- or late winter (November to January). This type of land occupies 131 acres and yields a revenue of Rs. 1,332 per year. In the *tābi* land sowing is done in winter (October to November) and the crops are harvested in summer (April to May). *Tābi* land covers 162·4 acres in the village and yields a revenue of Rs. 1,868/12/0 per year. Finally 63·5 acres are classed as the much prized *do fasla* or two crop land. As the very name suggests, crops are sown and harvested on this land twice every year. Notwithstanding its small area this land yields a revenue of Rs. 1,208/12/0. All this wet land is irrigated by channels from the Shamirpet tank. Mention may also be made of another 68 acres, which are irrigated by small privately owned tanks and wells and bring to the government a revenue of Rs. 745/12/0 per year. Wet land is very much desired by the cultivators because of its high productivity and requirement of com-
[436] paratively low investment. According to current valuation average wet land sells at Rs. 1,000 to Rs. 1,200 per acre.

241 It would only be natural to expect that in a primarily agri-
● 433 cultural community the number of professional cultivators and others directly dependent upon agriculture should be the highest. Table I shows the number of people who are wholly agriculturists, partly agriculturists and partly field-labourers, and partly agri-

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culturists and partly dependent for subsistence on other crafts and professions.

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TABLE I

Number of Families and People Depending on Agriculture as the Main Source of Livelihood.

Nature of agricultural work	*Total number of families*	*Total number of persons*	*Men*	*Women*	*Children*	*Number of people actually working*
1. Agriculturists (depending only on the cultivation of their land)	129	713	226	231	256	336
2. Partly agriculturists and partly field-labourers	154	803	249	271	283	493
3. Partly agriculturists and partly dependent on other crafts and professions	59	305	89	105	111	170

From the above it will be clear that 336 people actually employed whole-time in agriculture maintain 129 families consisting of 713 people. The other class is more numerous. In it 493 people working together maintain 154 families comprising in all 803 people. These partly cultivate their own fields and partly work as labourers with other agriculturists. The third category includes those who are partly agriculturists, and derive a part of their subsistence from some other craft or profession: 59 families having in all 305 people constitute this group.

The remaining fraction of the village population consists of people who contribute indirectly to agriculture or who have a function in some other field of community life. Table II gives the number of families and people in other occupations.

The figures in Tables I and II are for the main village of Shamirpet and do not include the agriculturists and occupational castes from the hamlets of Babugura and Upparpalli, which are regarded, in land records, as parts of Shamirpet.

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ment. As all the Madiga families in the village are not affiliated to the agriculturists, in these calculations their average income from these sources comes to only 58%, although a few decades ago, when the traditional system worked better, it must have been considerably more. The potters earn much more by selling their earthenware in the markets than by their traditional arrangements with the families of agriculturists. Similarly, some of the washermen have now a clientele in the city. Twice or thrice every month they collect clothes from them, delivering at the same time the previous washing. The barbers have a limited number of clients in the neighbouring villages. All the castes in this group derive an appreciable portion of their total earnings from private work done outside the system of traditional arrangements.

The economy of the village is only partially self-sufficient. The traders, both Komtis and Muslims, buy their goods wholesale from the city and retail them in their shops in the village. People often buy their requirements from the city if they happen to go there. They frequently visit the weekly bazaars also. The weavers buy their spindles from Hyderabad wholesalers, and depend for the sale of their cloth on the cluster of several nearby villages. The customers of the goldsmith are also distributed in several villages of the neighbourhood. The Gaondla produces all the fermented palm-juice required in the settlement from the trees around the village, but he has also to keep a certain quantity of liquor distilled in the city for such customers as may order it occasionally. The occupation of stone-breaking takes the Vaddars to several villages in the neighbourhood where there are no members of their caste. Finally, Madiga families acquiring a reputation for their skill in curing and tanning hides, or in their leather-work, are also commissioned by outsiders occasionally to do some work for them.

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312 Tungabhadra scheme; but the history of large-scale irrigation here is discouraging, though of course much experience has been gained since the 377 Kurnool failure. With the development of hydro-electricity there may come 491 decentralised industrial development on the Mysore model; but Mysore 433 had a more solid backing in at least some industry, sericulture and Bhadravati iron for instance, to give a base. Telangana is not without resources such as oilseeds and fibres (including sheep and goat wool), and in view of *India's* shortages in non-ferrous metals development of the poor communication net might lead to at least some exploitation of the scattered minerals. But when all is said, it seems likely that Telangana will remain, if not a backward, at least a poor country.

The Anantapur-Chittoor Basins

133 Between the bold scarp of the Palkonda Range and the higher Mysore levels are a series of basins around the middle courses of the Penner tributaries—Chitravati, Papagni, Punchu/Cheyyeru, the last two with a remarkable confluence-gorge in the Palkondas. To the SE the sub-region breaks down to the Nellore/Coromandel plains through the little intermont basins of the Nagari Hills (up to 2800 ft) and through the broader Swarnamukhi valley, which may occupy a fault-trough under the Palkondas. The whole area is crossed by N/S or NE/SW trap dykes, which may also have some influence on the remarkable drainage-pattern.

311 The area is isolated and poor, except in the extreme SE—the Nagari valleys, culturally transitional to Tamilnad. Only 20% of Chittoor Dt is cultivated—less than any other Madras District except the Nilgiris—but the density is **304**, intermediate between the Ceded Districts (*c.* **185**) and the coastal plains (**450–650**). Millets account for over 40% of the cropped area, followed by rice and groundnuts (24 and 14%).

491 There is no urban or industrial development worth mentioning. The
311 Nagari basins are better cultivated than those of the plateau, but even they
133 are not very impressive agriculturally: their flattish floors are broken by patches of sandy soil, almost bare but for a thin grass/acacia cover, and by naked rock exfoliation surfaces, looking like *roches moutonnées* and often used as threshing floors. Around the plain a lateritic piedmont slope fringes the craggy hills, with boulders as big as a small house on the talus slopes.
[361] Below the lateritic apron is a better-watered and more fertile piedmont strip, which is in places a solid belt of paddy, the zone of bush and trees along the laterite margin being a favoured settlement-line. It is a strange landscape: fantastic hills, stacked and pinnacled, long ridges capped by massive quartzites, reflected in the still waters of the big tanks with their borders of toddy palms; an eerily attractive picture under iron-blue or grey skies.

6:Spate N-4 (no date)1954 AW1 India
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For the purely delta taluks, of course, the rice proportion would be higher. Tobacco covers some 200,000 ac. in all, the best being grown on temporary sand-islands in the larger streams. Some sugar is grown, but this tall and long-standing crop must be protected from cyclones by expensive fencing with bamboos.

Again mineral potentialities are slight and development slighter. There are two tiny unworked coalfields, of dubious value, in the Gondwanas along the Godavari; graphite and kaolin are worked in a small way, mainly for Rajahmundry paper mills (which use paddy straw as well as bamboo from the hills) and for the small crucible industry at the same town. Salt evaporation at Cocanada might lead to a chemical industry. Industry itself, though very small-scale, is interesting; as well as the Rajahmundry works just mentioned, and the rice and tobacco trades to be expected, there are cement, silk, fruit canning, and vegetable ghee works. Most of these are congregated along the Kistna below Bezwada and between Rajahmundry and Cocanada. Varied as it is, the total is not impressive: the crucible industry has 150 skilled workers, the paper mill a capacity of 3000 tons p.a.; the 77 rice mills in E Godavari employ only 1800 workers, the three silk factories 122; and the total industrial population of this District is only 7200—0·39% of total population, and at that not much below the figure for Madras State (0·42%). Such as it is, this industrial development has yet led to an ominous, if incipient, competition for land in a few tracts between tobacco and paddy; fortunately the region, except for Guntur, has a sizeable rice surplus (about 400,000 tons less 110,000 tons deficit in Guntur); and counting all foodgrains Guntur also has a surplus.[1]

The industrial, and to some extent the agricultural, future of the region will depend on whether or not the great Ramapadasagar multi-purpose scheme is executed; at present financial difficulties stand in the way. The proposed dam, 428 ft high with foundations 190 ft below the river bed, and 1½ miles long, would impound 15·6 m. ac.-ft of water, irrigate for paddy some 2·35 m. ac. of un- or under-developed land, improve the supply to 2 m. ac. already irrigated, and develop at least 100,000 kW; it might also, and less beneficially, trap the silt.

There are a fair number of minor towns. The site-significances of Bezwada (**161,198**) and Rajahmundry (**105,276**) are plain; Guntur (**125,255**) and Ellore (64,911) are trading centres with a little industry. The ports of Cocanada (75,140) and Masulipatam (59,146) are of little use. At Masulipatam large ships must lie 5 miles offshore (weather permitting!) and the half-dozen wharves are three miles up a winding creek; yet in early European days it was a place of great importance, famous for carpets and

[1] This discussion is based on (i) Dr. V. L. S. P. Rao's interesting summary of his doctoral dissertation, "Industrial Problems, Development, and Planning [in] . . . the Lower Godavari Region" (*IGJ* XXIII (1948), 1–15); (ii) V. V. Ramanadham and V. L. S. P. Rao, *Economic Atlas of Andhra Desa* (Calcutta, 1949).

31: Slater S-5 (1916-1917) 1918 AWI India
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implements are bought chiefly in Chintamani, about 18 miles off, and also at Srinivasapur, about 14 miles off.

Articles of consumption are bought at the weekly fair held here on Tuesdays, also in Chintamani, Kothakota and some other places.

Sale of village produce.—The quantities produced here are: paddy 500 puttis,* ragi 200, † sugarcane to the value of about Rs. 1,500, other millets and pulses to the value of about Rs. 1,000.

Out of this whatever is required for household purposes is retained. The rest, more than 50 per cent, is sold away. The nearest market is Chintamani. Sometimes the grain is transported to Bangalore also.

There are about three local roads, one from Gownipalle to Addegal, a village 4 miles off, one from the village to Manchinillakota, a village 6 miles off, and the other up to Todigol, 6 miles off. Another short road running for three miles runs up to the Mysore frontier. On the other side is British territory and there is no road further up. The local road to Tadigol connects with the Bangalore-Cuddapah road. The nearest commercial centres are Chintamani and Bangalore, accessible by the said road. The nearest railway station is Srinivasapur, about 14 miles off, reached by road.

The fair that takes place here every week is a big affair. People from very different parts come here. The fair is nominally held on Tuesday, but it generally extends from Monday to Wednesday. The chief business is carried on in stock, especially sheep and goats. Business in these is carried on to the extent of Rs. 4,000. They are chiefly sent to the Kolar Goldfields for slaughter and consumption.

Economic condition of village.—The customary rates of wages, in money, are from 2 to 3 annas per day, for a man; and 1½ annas for a woman; in kind, 2 seers of ragi, or 3 seers of paddy to a man, 1½ seers of ragi or 2 seers of paddy to a woman.

The current prices of staple foods are—

Rice	...	..	...	8 Mysore seers for a rupee.
Ragi	...	...	...	28 " "
Sazzulu	...	...	...	20 " "
Cholam	...	...	...	14 " "
Tamarind	...	...	...	Re. 1 for a maund.
Jaggery	...	...	...	Rs. 2 "
Chillis	...	...	...	Rs. 4-8-0 "
Dhôll	...	...	...	8 seers for a rupee.

About four or five families have made savings to the extent of Rs. 5,000, but on the other hand others have contracted debts to the extent of Rs. 10,000. Owing to scarcity of rains and failure of crops the people have been obliged to borrow heavily to meet current and occasional expenses.

There are practically no families who have liberated themselves from debt. While paying off old scores they borrow in new places.

There is a co-operative credit society. The capital is subscribed in shares of Rs. 10 each payable in twenty monthly instalments.

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* [Weight about 89 tons, value about Rs. 10,000.—Ed.]
† [Weight about 48 tons, value about Rs. 4,000.—Ed.]

426 The result is that many families that were once rich are now reduced to absolute poverty. The rich few are becoming richer. But 65 to 75 per cent of the population are in debt. Of these 25 to 30 per cent have hopes of clearing it off in three or four years by mortgaging their lands. The rest, 35 to 40 per cent, are not able to escape easily out of debt. The pity is that these classes do not hesitate to contract debts at first, and then they are not in a hurry to return them soon, and small sums accumulate into large amounts.

438 *Trade.*—The villagers purchase commodities for industrial and
[543] agricultural purposes from weekly fairs held at Nidadavolu and from Rajahmundry; for consumption, partly from weekly fairs
433 at Nidadavolu and partly from the local traders. The amount of village produce sold was approximately as follows:—

	1916-17.	1915-16.
Soap nuts	250 bags.	500 bags.
Horsegram	200 (or 250) bags.	400 „
Gingelly	220 bags.	850 „
Red gram (this is mostly retained for local use).	50–60 „	100 „
Bengal gram	25–30 „	100 „
Ghee	50 60 tins.	50–60 tins.
Cholam (this is retained for local use; no crop this year).	...	50 bags.
Black gram	20 bags.	12 „

249 *Jaggery trade.*—The most noteworthy feature of the village is
438 the jaggery trade, carried on during the summer season. Nearly half the field area of the village consists of dry sand, filled with palmyra trees. These trees are rented out to the toddy tappers, who have to pay from Rs. 15 to 20 each in rent. One man can draw toddy from about 60 trees. Some 1,000 to 1,200 of these tappers come from the different taluks of the Kistna and Gōdāvari districts to this village in summer; while 200 to 225 go from the village itself. These people settle in the fields in the three summer months during which the fields lie waste, and draw toddy from 5 to 10 a.m. and 3 to 7 p.m. They have to climb the tree and suspend pots, lined with lime, beneath the cut ends of the stalks of the fronds of the palm from which the juice (toddy) flows. But for the lime the toddy would immediately begin to ferment. The women at home boil the toddy till it is condensed into jaggery.

Part of the jaggery is sold to the direct agents of Messrs. Parry & Co., who have opened an extensive business in these parts and invested a large capital. These agents of the company purchase jaggery with the company's money and get a commission at the rate of As. 2-6 per bag. They send it to Samalkot, where the company converts it into sugar.

The remainder is sold by the tappers to private capitalists and retail traders, who purchase the jaggery in the fields and sell it again to the company's agent in the village. They receive no commission, but make a profit in three ways: (1) There is a difference in the cost per candy between the prices in the fields (i.e., near the tappers' huts) and in the village. (2) The traders lend money to the tappers in times of need and get "Jattis" executed, promises by which the tappers agree to repay the money in the shape of jaggery